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CIA RECRUITING IN THE LOWER RIO GRANDE VALLEYBY MACK SISKHARLINGEN, TX

A recruiter says the Central Intelligence Agency has not targeted the Lower Rio Grande Valley in its search for personnel but would welcome applications from the predominantly Hispanic area.

The CIA's five-column ad in the Valley Morning Star newspaper, offering salaries from \$22,000 to \$34,000, gained quite a bit of attention in an area known as "America's Third World" where help wanted columns run short.

The Valley ranks at the top nationally in unemployment and at the bottom in wages.

"The CIA is an equal opportunity employer," said a line at the bottom of the agency's Sunday advertisement.

"It's a nationwide effort. (The Valley is) just one of the markets we're advertising in," said an official in the CIA's regional recruiting office at Dallas. "We've been running ads like this for 10 years or more.

"We'd love to get applicants from that community. We're just a regional recruiting office, but all the jobs are in Washington or overseas," he said.

The CIA official would not comment on what kind of response drawn by the ad, which boasts "unique overseas assignments that challenge your every talent."

"We are not talking about a job, but a unique professional career that provides an uncommon measure of personal challenge and satisfaction," the ad said. "And the work is important. It answers the question: 'What can I do for my country?'"

Requirements for joining up with the CIA were listed as strong interpersonal skills; aptitude for learning a foreign language; a college degree with good academic record; flexibility; and excellent oral and written communications.

"You must have U.S. citizenship and a knowledge of foreign affairs. Maximum age 35. Foreign travel, previous residence abroad, graduate study, or military service would be pluses," the advertisement added.

The CIA's valley recruiting effort follows allegations in October by Rep. Henry B. Gonzalez, D-Texas, that the CIA was behind a Defense Department contractor's effort to recruit Spanish-speaking "instructors" through the Texas Employment Commission.

Gonzalez said the CIA wants to send American Hispanics to Central America.

Alvin Ornstein with the American Educational Complex, a Killeen-based education service under contract to the Defense Department, said his company placed an ad with the TEC because it anticipated the Pentagon's need for Spanish-speaking people to work as instructors in Central America.

Ornstein denied the CIA had anything to do with the project.

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"We're not recruiting for the CIA. We're not recruiting for anybody," he said.

Ornstein said the TEC ad was a market survey to determine the availability of Spanish-speaking men with military experience willing to work as instructors on "unaccompanied tours" in Central America.

"You can understand our anticipation of a potential market," Ornstein said.

The program was coordinated by civilian instructors at the Army's III Corps Training School at Fort Hood near Killeen. The instructors are from Central Texas College, one of several U.S. institutions that are members of an educational consortium called the American Educational Complex.

The AEC is under contract with Defense Department to provide a variety of "educational" services to the military through its member colleges.

The employment commission was asked to find Spanish-speaking men with military experience who would instruct in radio communications, small arms, weapons procurement, field medical care and vehicle maintenance.

A TEC memo dated Aug. 18 stated the individuals would be on one-year tours without their dependents. Food and housing would be furnished and applicants had to pass a security clearance.

TEC officials said they received a memo in early October to end the program.

Ornstein said 300 names and resumes came in for the AEC jobs.